

Kingdom Come: The Resurrected Boy

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Summary: Cedric felt very ill with the realization that his life would now be divided into two parts: before he died and after he died. The space between them was a canyon.

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**\*\*Kingdom Come\*\*\_\*\*:** The Resurrected Boy**\*\*\_**

## Chapter One

The first Cedric heard of it was his third evening at St. Mungo's Hospital for Magical Maladies and Injuries, fourth floor. The nurses, dressed in white with the wand and bone crest on their shirt pockets, were taking on the formidable task of convincing Cedric's father to go home.

And for the third night in a row they were met with absolute refusal.

"He'll be lucky if I ever let him out of my sight again," his father told the polite but irritated staff for the upteenth time, and then smiled at Cedric, taking one of his son's hands in both of his own. He had tears in his eyes, and Cedric had always known his father to be the smiling, laughing type, exuding warmth and kindness like an aura, not one to cry just by looking at him in a certain way. But crying seemed to be all Amos Diggory had done the past three days. Sob and worry and hold onto Cedric at every opportunity, and not sleep a wink. Even Cedric's mother's attempts to bring him home had been unsuccessful and she had gone hours ago, too tired to argue.

"You're exhausted," Cedric said, his own voice weary and soft. Despite having done little but lie in bed under the close observation of doctors, he still felt just as weak as when he had arrived at St. Mungo's. And he could see it in his father's heavy, purple bagged

eyes that it was hurting him even more than Cedric. "Pretty soon they'll have to get you a room of your own if you don't start taking care of yourself."

Amos chuckled at that, leaned over and kissed Cedric on the forehead like he did when Cedric was a little boy. "Just like you to be worried about someone else after everything you've been through." He wept even as he smiled, and Cedric lifted a hand to brush those tears away. His father held Cedric's open palm to his cheek and closed his eyes.

"We almost lost you," his father said, and Cedric shook his head. He didn't want to hear this again. But Amos continued, his voice shaking. "I almost lost you to - to \_You-Know-Who\_ -"

"Dad." Cedric wrapped his arms around his father's neck which only made him cry harder, shoulders shaking in Cedric's grasp. "Go home. It's just for the night. You and Mum can come back right away in the morning." Cedric pulled away to find his father's wet eyes again. "I'm okay, Dad. I'm alive."

Lower lip trembling, Amos gathered his son's face in both hands and studied him closely, like if he didn't he would forget what he looked like. "But you did die, son." Amos' hands began to tremble. "I saw you - your body. It was \_empty\_. You weren't in it, Cedric. You were gone. You were \_dead\_." He inhaled sharply and closed his eyes, the memory so horrific that he could not contain his sobs.

Cedric's mouth was too dry to swallow. He peeled his father's hands from his face and held them together tightly. "Dad â€¦"

"You know what they're calling you in the Daily Prophet?" Amos shook his head, eyes still closed, and he pulled his hands away just to fish in his pocket for a handkerchief. He blew his nose loudly and then looked at the nurses still lingering awkwardly in the room. "They know. They've read all about it, in fact. Saw them this morning, over their tea."

Cedric's brows came together. He'd been in and out of consciousness for three days, unable to find the strength to keep himself awake for longer than a few hours at a time. Between his parents and the doctors fussing over him he'd had little time to do much else. "What? What are they saying?"

The silence that followed was as uncomfortable as it was long. The St. Mungo's staff glanced nervously at each other. It seemed that Mr. Diggory was waiting for one of them to explain, unable to do so himself, but when none of them offered, Cedric asked again.

"What are they saying about me?" He met eyes with the youngest of the nurses, a redheaded girl maybe a handful of years older than Cedric himself, and pleaded. "Is it bad?"

The young woman frowned. Her badge read Flora. She looked at her fellow nurses, then Cedric's father, then Cedric again. Flora opened her mouth to speak but nothing came out, so she cleared it and tried again. "They're calling you the â€¦ the boy who came back from the dead." She paused a moment, and took a deep breath. "The Resurrected Boy."

Amos readjusted his glasses with a sniffle. "You're the next Harry Potter, s'far as everyone's concerned."

The name felt like a punch to Cedric's chest. His eyes clenched closed and he saw Harry Potter's face contorted with fear, screams echoing across Cedric's memories until they reached into the present, as if Harry were standing right next to him, as if he had never stopped screaming.

Cedric flinched. It rippled from his face all the way to his feet, a spasm that made him groan in pain. That caught the nurses' attention. They rushed to his side, the redheaded nurse putting a cool hand to his forehead while another took Amos gently by the arm and steered him toward the door.

"Your son needs his rest, Mr. Diggory," the man told him, gentle but firm. "And I must insist you give him some peace and quiet so he can get it."

Amos tried to refuse, again, and looked back at his son.

Watching Cedric struggle was almost unbearable for Amos and Cedric knew this. He tried to recover from his momentary lapse as quickly as possible to offer his father a ghost of a reassuring smile. "I'm okay, Dad. Really. I'll see you in the morning."

His father did not seem convinced. The male nurse took another step with him still in tow toward the door and Amos shot him an angered look, even more uncharacteristic than his frequent crying of late, and Cedric thought for a moment that his father might raise his voice, something Cedric had rarely seen him do. He hoped that this, all of it, any of it, would not change his father into someone he didn't know.

But Amos caught himself, relaxed in the nurse's hold, and finally relented. He allowed himself to be guided to the door and at the threshold he stopped to look back at Cedric one more time.

"I love you, son," he said, eyes still damp.

Cedric relaxed against the pillow. "Love you, too."

When he was finally gone, Cedric listened to the nurses whispering over him until they were satisfied with his signs, and then they trickled out, one by one, until Flora was the only one who remained, mixing a potion at Cedric's bedside.

"Is it true, then?" Cedric asked her as she passed the cup to him. He leaned up on his elbow. "I'm the Resurrected Boy?"

Flora gave a short nod. "You were on the front page of the Prophet. Drink that, now. It'll help you sleep."

He stared into the cup, a milky white liquid that smelled of ginger, and frowned. "Couldn't've been Resurrected Man? I'm nearly eighteen."

With a snort, Flora laughed, which Cedric thought adorable. "Back from the dead and that's what you're worried about?"

Cedric smiled. He threw back his head and downed the potion in one swallow, a tingling sensation chasing all the way to his stomach.

The Resurrected Boy, brought back by the Boy Who Lived. Cedric shook his head to himself and placed the cup carefully on the table. Flora touched his shoulder and gave him a small, tentative smile.

When Flora turned out the lights and left, Cedric stared into the dark and realized that this was the first time he had been alone since it happened. He suddenly wished he had not convinced his father to leave, that he was still there at the side of the bed, one hand on his hair, just like he had done when Cedric was a little boy.

There was a hollowness in him that he could not explain. He took a deep breath like that would fill it, but when he let it out in one long rush there was nothing still. The emptiness frightened him; he knew something was missing, something was gone, taken, but he didn't know what it was, and he didn't know what would grow in its place.

The potion pulled him under before fear could and he dreamed the same dream he had the two nights before.

It began with Harry Potter screaming.

\* \* \*

><p>The next morning Minister Fudge was eating breakfast with Cedric in his room, which is something Cedric couldn't have conjured in his wildest fantasies: him and the Minister of Magic, eating biscuits and sausage together at a small round table by the window in his hospital room at St. Mungo's, on what would have been an otherwise uneventful Wednesday.<p>

Cedric still didn't have the strength to stand so when not in bed he was in a wheelchair, and it was from this that he watched Minister Fudge dab at his mouth with a hospital napkin, and really, Cedric thought he had seen strange things in Divination class.

Of all of the things that he had expected to happen today, this wasn't even on the list. That seemed to describe his life very accurately lately.

Truthfully, when his father told him he had a visitor, Cedric suspected Cho. His second guess would have been Harry, but before he had a chance to ask his father told him it was the Minister of Magic himself and then Cedric's stomach tucked itself into a monster of a knot. He found he couldn't eat his breakfast despite feeling very hungry and very weak, waiting for the inevitable question and dreading having to answer it.

Thus far the Minister had said little of consequence. He went on about how kind the staff were, asked if Cedric was being treated all right, how were his parents getting on, that kind of thing.

"Do you have any siblings at Hogwarts?" Fudge had smiled at him, all lips. "We always need students who excel like you."

Cedric didn't normally consider himself a very sarcastic person, his

mother always taught him that was quite rude, but he did have to restrain himself from looking quite obviously around the hospital room. He sure did excel, didn't he, winding up here.

But Cedric just flexed a polite smile and shook his head. "I had a sister, but she died when she was a baby." Before Fudge could utter an apology, Cedric lifted a hand and shook his head again. A well rehearsed motion. "It was a very long time ago, I was only five."

"Well," Fudge resigned. "If she had been anything like you, then she would have been a magnificent witch."

Cedric thanked him. Their food came then, and Cedric was spared any more sad glances. Fudge busied himself with their meal, making comments, "I'll have to remember to say something to the chef on the way out, this is marvelous," and all Cedric could do was smile and nod because what else does someone say to the Minister of Magic in a time like this?

Cedric knew why he was there, anyway, and he wished Fudge would just ask and get it over with so Cedric could go back to bed. He'd been awake for less than an hour and he already felt fatigued. His head hurt and he wanted another one of the potions Flora had given him yesterday, the one that tasted sort of sour but made his headache vanish in minutes. He didn't want to talk to Fudge. He didn't want to talk about it at all.

"Sir?"

The Minister looked up at him, and Cedric realized a moment too late that he had interrupted him mid-sentence. Cedric flushed.

"I'm sorry, sir, I don't mean to be rude. I know you came all this way to see me but I'm very tired. Is there something I can do for you?" Cedric squinted against the morning sun through the window and held his hands tightly in his lap.

Fudge sat back. "Oh, it's quite all right, my boy. I can go on a bit of a ramble sometimes." He folded his napkin and sighed, looking at everywhere but Cedric. They were alone, his mother and father down in the lounge, the staff no doubt listening in from outside the door, and Fudge's people surely trying to prevent them from doing so. Cedric had caught a glimpse earlier of what must be Fudge's bodyguard; the man was so massive that seeing him stand beside quaint little Fudge was comical.

When the Minister finally did look back at Cedric, it was with a well creased frown. "Have you had any contact with Harry Potter?"

The question was not the one Cedric had been preparing for and it threw him off. For a moment his rising dread was trumped by confusion. He frowned and shook his head. "No. Why?"

"You haven't sent any letters to anyone?" Fudge dismissed Cedric's question and folded his hands on the table, eyebrows raised like he was waiting for - \_expecting \_Cedric to lie.

"No," Cedric said again, this time more firmly.

"But you have received letters, isn't that correct?"

Cedric's brows came together, not following. "Yes. From my friends."

"And none of them were from Harry Potter?"

"No." Cedric paused. "I don't think so. I haven't looked at them all yet. There are a lot."

Fudge smiled, like Cedric had just revealed something criminal. "I see. Cedric, I know this is not a very comfortable topic for you, but it's important that I know what happened the night of the final task. What you saw."

The morning light burned Cedric's eyes when he turned away from Fudge, toward the window. He didn't look away even though it hurt, willed the sun to turn everything he saw to ash in his mind so he wouldn't have to remember it anymore.

Resurrection had not been kind enough to grant him amnesia. He wished it had. He couldn't keep himself awake for very long and every time he slept it was another chance to watch it all unfold again, every terrible moment. He'd seen it enough.

"Harry Potter claims â€|" Fudge shook his head in apparent disbelief. "He claims that You-Know-Who has returned."

Cedric's pulse jumped. "You don't believe him." It wasn't a question.

The Minister sighed for so long Cedric was sure he would deflate right in his chair. "I am trying to get the story straight."

"Why would Harry lie?" Cedric cocked his head. "What would he possibly have to gain from lying about something like this?"

Cedric never imagined he would find himself under any circumstances in which he would argue with the Minister of Magic. He also never thought the Minister of Magic would ever look at him with such intense irritation, almost rage, or that he was even capable of it. He seemed so harmless in the papers, almost dim. During the Tournament his contact with the Minister had been limited to pictures, mostly, and Cedric had considered him a bit pompous but well meaning.

The expression Cedric saw was one he had never seen in the Daily Prophet, and certainly not one had he witnessed during their brief meetings for the press during the Tournament. It came and went in an instant but Cedric read it in that short time, and it was livid.

Fudge might be a portly old man now but he hadn't always, and Cedric caught a glimpse of the young wizard he must have been.

"Mr. Diggory," Fudge began, straightening in his chair. The redness that had started to build in his cheeks gave way to white as he willed himself to relax. "I am here to find out the truth. If I believed fully that Mr. Potter was lying, then why would I be here at all?"

That gave Cedric a moment of pause. He folded his hands in his lap.

Several seconds of tense silence lapsed before Fudge spoke again and when he did it was with a significantly calmer tone. "I know that whatever happened to you, Cedric, was â€| unpleasant. Traumatic. But I need you to tell me everything you can."

"I will," Cedric said, drawing circles on his kneecap. "If you promise to answer a question of mine when I'm done."

Fudge hesitated for a moment, then nodded. He brought his tea to his lips, now surely cold, though if it bothered him at all he didn't show it.

Cedric settled in the wheelchair and looked out the window again. He began with the start of the last task of the Tournament, standing outside the maze with Dumbledore and Harry and the others. He told him about the Skrewt, Viktor's bewitched attack, defeating the Acromantula with Harry, and taking the cup with him.

"We argued for a bit about who should take it. I said he should, he said I shouldâ€|" Cedric smiled to himself, shook his head and looked back into his lap at his open hands. "He's very polite."

Fudge made some sort of noise that Cedric couldn't decipher, so he ignored it.

"We decided to take it together. We grabbed it at the same time and â€| and I think I knew before Harry did, what it was: a portkey. It happened so fast. For a minute I thought that was what was supposed to happen, that it was just transporting us out of the maze. I wasn't afraid." Cedric ran a hand through his hair, down the back of his neck, and settled his first two fingers under his jaw, on his jugular. "And then I was."

"Where did you go?" Fudge prompted. "Where did the portkey take you?"

Cedric frowned, shaking his head. "I remember being confused. Why would it take us to a â€| a graveyard? I thought it would bring us back to the front of the maze where the crowd was, where everyone was waiting for usâ€| but there were headstones, and it was coldâ€|"

Under his fingers his pulse climbed. He put his hand back in his lap and held it with the other.

"Harry said, he said we had to get back to the cup. I didn't understand. He sounded afraid. I looked around for the cup, and then I heard â€|" Cedric's head yanked backward suddenly and he frantically searched above him, where the voice had come from. "This terrible, terrible voice, this awful voice, and it said, he said â€|" Cedric swallowed hard and closed his eyes. "He said, \_kill the spare\_."

A shudder crawled the length of Cedric's spine. He felt nauseous, cold, even though the sun filled the window next to him, it was as if he had never known light in his life, like everything had only ever

been dark.

"And then another -" Cedric's head jerked down again and he stared over Fudge's shoulder. Fudge looked uneasy, poised to run for the door, but Cedric didn't notice. Behind Fudge Cedric saw headstones and fog and old, dying grass. Goosebumps raced down his arms. "He said - he cast the spell that killed me."

Cedric was breathing heavily, ragged, but there was no air in his lungs, they weren't working, weren't responding. He flattened a hand over his sternum.

"Should I fetch a nurse -?"

"No," Cedric said, eyes squeezed shut as he hyperventilated over the table. "No, I'm fine. I just." He swallowed in air like he was drowning. "There was a great green light, and then there was nothing." Cedric sat back, peeled his eyes open and searched the ceiling again. He shivered, curled his toes in his slippers, and forced himself to breathe as regularly as he could. In through his mouth, out through his nose.

Minister Fudge didn't speak for a long time, waiting for Cedric to calm down, to not look like he was about to unleash something wild and dangerous. Finally, the Minister closed his hands on the table. "Did you ever actually see him?"

Cedric swiveled his head to meet Fudge's stare again. "Which one?"

"You-Know-Who." Fudge watched him very closely. "Did you \_see\_ him?"

The wheelchair creaked as he tried to find a comfortable position. There was none. He grabbed the armrests and closed his eyes again, tried to see through the brilliant green light that had consumed him in those last few seconds. Their voices were branded in his memory but they had no faces.

He shook his head. "No." He opened his eyes, searched the window again. "No, I didn't see him. But he was there. I heard him."

Fudge smiled as if he had just solved something very puzzling. He leaned back and looked out the window as well, his expression almost serene.

"Sir," Cedric pressed. "He \_was \_there. Harry is telling the truth. Voldemort is back."

It was instantaneous, as it always was, hearing the name - Fudge recoiled as if he'd been struck, and he averted his gaze. Cedric realized after a moment that this was the first time he'd ever said the name out loud, himself. Even as a child, playing with friends and daring each other to do dangerous and stupid things, none of them would have thought to taunt someone into saying that name. Cedric leaned away from the table and settled into the wheelchair with a frown.

He didn't feel any different. He supposed he thought he would.



"Mr. Diggory," Fudge said, coming to a hurried stand. "Thank you for your time, I believe you need your rest, and I have what I need." He stepped around the table and raised a hand. It hovered in mid air for a moment and Cedric could tell he was trying to decide if he really wanted to risk touching Cedric, like he was afraid to, and Cedric frowned, didn't understand why. Ultimately Fudge did reach out and put a tentative hand on his shoulder. "Get well soon, my boy."

Cedric straightened. "You promised you'd answer a question of my own, sir."

Fudge glanced toward the door. "I suppose I did."

"Is Harry alright?"

Fudge looked about as prepared for that question as Cedric had at first. "He's fine," Fudge said, so quickly it was one word.

"Fine." Cedric felt very small in the chair, dwarfed by Fudge while he stood. "Do they know â€¦ does anyone know what happened, exactly?" He shifted. "What Harry did?"

The Minister frowned. It seemed a permanent fixture of his face these days. "No. But he is being investigated by the Ministry."

"\_Investigated\_?" Cedric's heart raced. "For what?"

Fudge backpedaled. "My boy -"

"Please. Harry is my - my friend. He -" Cedric motioned to himself. "He saved my life. He can't get in trouble for doing that, can he?"

"No. But it is still a matter that the Ministry must look into. This is â€¦ sensitive magic that enabled Harry to â€¦" Fudge didn't finish his sentence. "In the wrong hands, it could prove to be very dangerous."

Cedric didn't follow. "What kind of magic?"

Again, the Minister glanced at the door. Cedric had seen him uncomfortable in pictures before but never quite like this, like he'd rather be anywhere else in the world.

Fudge looked back at him. "Necromancy," he said, matter-of-fact, and held his hands behind his back.

Maybe it was stupid of him to have not thought of that before, but Cedric felt like the air had been sucked out of the room. His face crumpled and he shook his head. "But that, that's - that's Dark Magic," he blurted incredulously.

"Precisely." Fudge raised his eyebrows. "But this is â€¦ not traditional necromancy, not as we have known it. You, Mr. Diggory, are not just an animated corpse. You are alive. And that," Fudge said, looking out the window again. "Is even more dangerous magic, if it were to fall into the wrong hands." He sighed, then reached out again and put a careful hand on Cedric's shoulder. "Harry Potter is

not in trouble. The incident is simply being investigated for the safety of the Wizarding world. Now, I really must be going. You need your rest and I have a very busy schedule."

Cedric, still frowning, shook the Minister's hand, and then he departed in a hurry, leaving the distinct smell of mothballs behind him. Cedric sank into the wheelchair.

By the time his parents returned, he was asleep. Harry was still screaming.

\* \* \*

><p>He saw it two days later. Cedric could walk then, with aide, and he had made it all the way to the lounge at the end of the hall, where he sat in rocking chair with a quilt over his lap like a decrepit old man. If Cedric had any energy left to be embarrassed, he probably would be. As it was, he was just glad to be out of his room.<p>

The fourth level of St. Mungo's was specifically for patients harmed by spells and jinxes. Across the hall from the lounge was the entrance to the Janus Thickey Ward. It was locked. When he asked why, Flora told him it was for long term and permanent patients, ones who couldn't return home.

"Wait," Cedric had asked as Flora guided him into the patients' lounge. His steps were slow, every movement a terrible ache, though he worked hard to keep it off his face. "Is that where Gilderoy Lockhart lives now?"

The nurse quirked a smile. "That's confidential."

"I've heard he's insufferable," Cedric had said when Flora deposited him into the chair.

She'd shrugged the statement off. "Everyone becomes a different person when they come here."

Cedric thought about that for a long time after Flora left to get him something to keep busy. He certainly felt different here, like someone else. Or, rather, that a part of himself was missing, and that without it he wasn't whole, and if he wasn't whole, was he the same person?

There were a few other patients in the lounge with him, most visiting with family members. It didn't take long for him to realize that they were watching him and their attempts to be discreet - hiding behind papers, leaning close to one another and whispering out of the corners of their mouths - were anything but subtle. Some just point blank stared.

Cedric pulled absently at a loose thread in the quilt. Was this what it felt like to be Harry Potter all the time?

When Flora reappeared it was with a smile and Cedric relaxed, eager for the distraction. She carried in her arms a newspaper and several magazines.

"I could grab some puzzles for you too, if you want," she said,

placing the stack into Cedric's lap.

"This is great, thank you."

"Anything else for you, dear?"

"Could I get a glass of water?"

Flora smiled. "Of course." She started to leave, then turned on her heel to face him again. "You've received more letters. Did you want to read them yet?"

He hesitated, idly folding the front cover corner of the magazine in his lap.

"No pressure," she assured, smiling. "You can open them whenever you want."

"Tomorrow, maybe." Cedric said, and Flora nodded and walked away.

He flipped through the first magazine with disinterest, was much more intrigued by the Quibbler underneath it, and he shuffled through the rest until he came to the Daily Prophet.

Cedric read the headline and nearly dropped it.

**\*\*THE BOY WHO LIES?\*\***

Snatching it, Cedric stared into Harry Potter's frightened, slow blinking eyes, heart rushing in his ears. The article accompanying the headline was horrendous, nothing but dragging Harry and Dumbledore both through the mud and back again. Harry was labeled "unstable, dangerous, and hungry for attention" while Dumbledore was "senile".

"\_We have had thirteen years of peace and we will continue to have many more\_," Prime Minister Fudge was quoted as saying. "\_There is no reason to believe that You-Know-Who has returned\_."

Cedric's blood boiled. His rage lifted him from the rocking chair, dumped the other magazines and the quilt from his lap onto the floor.

"\_The attack at the Triwizard Tournament was committed by a madman, nothing more. We should be grateful that there was no loss of innocent life as a result.\_"

Beside this, to Cedric's surprise, was a picture of himself. He was smiling, mid laugh, glancing sideways and then forward again - Cedric remembered this moment. It was just after the first task with the dragons. He had looked at Cho and then the camera.

He ran his thumb over the image of his own smiling face and felt very much detached from his own body at that moment. The person in the photograph couldn't possibly be the same person he was now.

In a daze, he continued reading the text beside his photograph.

\_There is yet to be an explanation for the mysterious resurrection of

Cedric Diggory, seventh year Hufflepuff and Triwizard Victor

—

Cedric paused. He won?

—who, according to witnesses, emerged from the final task void of life. —

—Experts suspect that Harry Potter used a form of Dark Magic to bring Diggory back from the grave, leaving us to question what other ominous powers Potter possesses. —

—One witness described the event as "Eerie — a blinding white light and a terrible bang."—

—Diggory currently resides at St. Mungo's Hospital for Magical Maladies and Injuries while he recovers.—

—What of The Resurrected Boy's testimony? Prime Minister Fudge had this to say on the matter: "I have spoken to Mr. Diggory. His story does not corroborate with that of Mr. Potter's. The trauma of this incident has left him extremely unwell, and at this time he is not be able to distinguish reality from fantasy."—

—St. Mungo's staff have declined comment on Diggory's condition.

—

"Cedric?"

Cedric flinched. Flora had one hand on his arm, the other holding a glass of water. He stared at her blankly. Her eyes were soft and kind and green. He watched them shift worriedly from his face to the paper, and then she paled.

"Oh, goodness." She pulled the paper from his hands and they hovered there, awkward and empty. "I didn't meant to give you today's paper. I thought I grabbed an old one." Flora rolled the paper against her hip, set the water on the table beside the rocking chair and then took Cedric by the shoulders. "I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to upset you—"

Cedric shook his head. He lost the strength to stand in one breath, dropping heavily into the rocking chair, and Flora stayed close to keep at his eye level.

"How can they not believe him?" Cedric said, and he was crying. He couldn't remember the last time he'd cried. It was tears of frustration and fear — if no one believed Harry, if no one believed him, then how could they prepare for Voldemort's return? He searched Flora's eyes again. "Do you believe me?"

Flora frowned. She reached out to smooth Cedric's hair out of his eyes but he pulled back. She sighed and turned away, picking up the mess on the floor. "I believe something awful happened to you, Cedric," she said, folding the quilt back into a modest square.

"You're right. Something awful did happen to me." Cedric leaned close to her. "I died. And it was because of Vol—" He clicked his mouth shut. "Because of You-Know-Who."

"I think we should get you back to bed-" she started to put her hands on him, to ease him out of the chair, but Cedric recoiled.

"\_No\_!"

And he smacked her hands out of his face.

The room was quiet. Cedric wasn't sure how long everyone had been staring, but there were certainly no efforts to be discreet now. One nurse, Cedric noticed, had a hand to his pocket, over the outline of his wand, and he seemed ready and determined to use it.

Cedric flushed. He looked away from them, away from Flora, to his hands in his lap. They were trembling.

Cedric took after his father. Like him, Cedric was level headed, soft, kind. Even the stress of the Tournament failed in shaking him to his core.

Where was his resolve now? His calm? Had it disappeared with whatever else was taken that night? Would more and more pieces of him start to break away until an entirely different person was born?

Had the real Cedric Diggory died? Was he just a ghost of who he was before?

Cedric felt very ill with the realization that his life would now be divided into two parts: before he died and after he died. The space between them was a canyon.

"I am different," Cedric said. The words cracked in his mouth. "I'm sorry."

Flora placed her soft, warm hands over his own. She forgave him.

Back in his room, Cedric wrote his first letter. He didn't care if the Daily Prophet or Fudge or whoever found out that he was sending it, either.

\_Harry\_, he wrote, pinching the quill so hard between his fingers he was afraid it would snap in half. \_I believe you. Thank you for bringing me back.\_

\* \* \*

><p>The day Dumbledore visited him was the first time Cedric walked on his own since he had arrived nearly two weeks before. It was just the length of his room but his parents were flush with pride, congratulating every step, and he felt very much like he had during his first match of elementary Quidditch. He was seven, the brooms were very low to the ground, and it was more like a very slow game of hovering catch than bearing any resemblance to true Quidditch, but one would have believed Cedric had just won the World Cup with the way his parents yelled and applauded from the sidelines.<p>

He'd been too young then to know he should have been embarrassed but he was all too aware now. Especially with Flora in the room. She

watched on kindly, not a trace of pity in her gaze, but Cedric still wished she wasn't there, that his parents would be quiet, and that walking by himself was not such a cause for celebration.

Cedric never considered himself someone who preferred to be alone but right then he would have given anything to be in an abandoned field somewhere, out of the cramped four walls of his hospital room, the stuffy St. Mungo's hallways, away from the nurses and doctors and his parents, away from everyone's curious, prying eyes, and to be completely isolated.

He imagined this type of place every time he fell asleep, which was less frequently now, and hoped the serene silence would carry into his dreams, but Harry was always waiting for him on the other side, screaming.

When Cedric finally returned to his bed he was more winded than he wanted to admit, though he assured Flora and his parents that he was fine. He relaxed back into the mattress, positive that it would soon mold to the rest of his body from how much time he'd spent in it.

"What are they saying about me in the paper now?" Cedric whispered to his mother after his father stepped out to talk with Flora and some other staff about his 'progress'. Amos avoided the question whenever Cedric asked and he hadn't been able to get his hands on a current paper since his outburst in the lounge. His mother was a much more blunt person. Eleanor Diggory had always been more direct than her husband - never rude, but forward.

"The focus has turned from you to poor Harry, these days," she said, keeping a careful eye on the door. "And the Headmaster."

Cedric flexed his hands at his sides. "I don't understand why they'd think we'd lie about this," he said.

Eleanor smiled, but it was sad. "Because that would mean they'd have to face the possibility of war time again. You were young then, Cedric. You don't remember how awful it was."

Cedric looked away. He'd been only three when Voldemort disappeared. He did not remember any of that time. Two years later, his sister would die. He remembered that much more clearly.

He sank into the pillow at his head. "The Minister was there. He saw me -" Cedric frowned, crossed his arms over his chest. "And to kill the only other witness? I know Barty was a madman, but he would have credited us. He'd've served his time in Azkaban like a proper criminal, and someone, \_someone\_ would have done time for what happened to me -"

"Cedric."

His mother's cool, calming touch at his elbow pulled Cedric out of an angry haze he hadn't even realized he'd dragged himself into. He huffed, swivled his arm around so he could take his mother's hand in his own and met her eyes. They were grey like his. Everything else about him was so much of his father. He was glad to have a piece of her, too.

He wondered, not for the first time, if his little sister would have looked like her. He thought his mother very beautiful, so he hoped so.

Eleanor smiled tenderly. "We believe you and Harry. We owe him a debt that we couldn't possibly even begin to repay, so the least we can do is trust he speaks the truth."

"Mum?" Cedric squeezed her hand. "How do you think Harry did it? Bring me back?"

She shook her head. "I don't know. But I thank God everyday for it, whatever it was. After Charlotte -" Eleanor paused, put one hand to her mouth, and closed her eyes. All these years had done little to heal the wound the loss of her daughter had left behind. "I didn't know how we were going to make it after Charlotte. It was you who held us together, who kept us strong. Losing you would have â€¦" She took a deep breath, met his eyes again, her own filled with tears.

"Mum." Cedric sat up and pulled his mother into a hug. She stroked the back of his head like he was small. He supposed he always would be to her, no matter how old he was, no matter what happened. He held her tightly. "I love you."

"I love you, too," she whispered, and when she pulled away she made a quick show of becoming presentable again before Amos returned, and when he did they both turned expectantly toward the door only to all but leap in surprise.

"Professor," Cedric blurted, shocked.

Dumbledore smiled at him from behind Amos, sweeping in with long navy robes and coming straight to Cedric's bedside. He shook Cedric's hand first, then his mother's, who was stunned into silence. Amos watched on, positively glowing. He'd always been very fond of Dumbledore.

"I hope you are all doing well," Dumbledore said, looking at each of the Diggorys in the eye with total sincerity and settling on Cedric when he spoke again. His eyes twinkled behind his crescent shaped glasses. "It is so good to see you, Cedric."

"You too, sir, thank you, sir."

"Relax," he said, and he touched Cedric's shoulder with the tips of his fingers, and maybe there was a bit of magic in his touch because Cedric did, instantly.

"Headmaster, my wife and I have been meaning to write to you -" Amos crossed the room and wrapped an arm around Eleanor's shoulders, beaming at the professor. "But I'm grateful we have a chance to say it to your face. We believe you, Headmaster. We believe you and the young boy who saved our son." Amos squeezed Eleanor, smiled at her, and then up at Dumbledore again, who surpassed him in height by several inches. "We thank you for all that you've done."

For a moment, Cedric was overwhelmed with the love he had for his parents. They stood tall and proud before the Headmaster, resilient, brave, knowing full well that the masses stood against them. To side with Dumbledore, with Harry, with him, that meant standing against

everyone else. That was no small feat. Amos might be a simple Magizoologist to anyone else, something Draco Malfoy had once teased Cedric for despite being three grades younger, and Eleanor a natural mother and housewife, but to Cedric they were the strongest, kindest people he'd ever known. He felt foolish for being so embarrassed of them before. Who could be ashamed of such wonderful people?

Dumbledore put one hand on each of his parents' shoulders. He thanked them, praised them for having raised such a brilliant young man, and then asked for a moment alone with Cedric. They both agreed, told Cedric they'd be in the tearoom upstairs, and shook Dumbledore's hand again. Cedric smiled as they left the room, feeling incredibly blessed.

Dumbledore whispered something to Cedric's parents at the door, then closed it behind them and came back to his bedside. As Dumbledore lowered himself into the chair Cedric's mother had previously occupied, he summoned it closer wordlessly with a wave of his hand, settling with a content sigh, elbows on the armrest and his fingers lacing together in the air.

"Cedric," Dumbledore said, his smile fond. "I said it once already but it is truly great to see you. How are you feeling?"

"I'm okay." The response was automatic. When Dumbledore raised his white eyebrows in disbelief and waited, Cedric relented. "Very sore. Tired. But it's getting better. I'm hoping to go home at the end of the week."

"Marvelous," Dumbledore's smile grew. "The other professors and I agreed to postpone the graduation ceremony until I had a chance to see how you were feeling. If you're home by the end of the week, we could celebrate it by having the end of the year feast and the ceremony this weekend â€|" Dumbledore trailed off, concern replacing his hopeful expression the longer he watched Cedric. "Are you alright?"

The blood had rushed out of Cedric's face. He shook his head, but when Dumbledore rose to fetch a nurse he motioned quickly for him to stop. "No, no, it's not â€|" sir," Cedric said, waiting for Dumbledore to sit again. Cedric looked at the hills of his knees under the blankets and pulled them closer. "Sir," he started again, taking a deep breath. "I don't want to attend the graduation ceremony."

Dumbledore blinked slowly, then leaned back in the chair. "That is certainly your choice. May I ask why?"

"I â€|" A line formed between his brows as Cedric brought them together. "I know what they're calling me in the paper. The Resurrected Boy." He glanced toward the door. "Everyone whispers it in the hallways. Everyone stares at me. But it's different from how they stared at me when I was in the Tournament."

"It is the way people stare at Harry Potter."

Cedric's breath caught. He nodded. "I know winning the Tournament would have singled me out. I was okay with that. But for being the Resurrected Boy? Not so much." He shook his head. "I don't know how



Harry does it, to be honest."

"With courage." Dumbledore placed his hand on Cedric's shoulder again. "I am so sorry that this happened to you, Cedric. Hogwarts failed to protect you, I failed to protect you, and it is something that I regret deeply."

"Sir, there's no way you could have known -"

Dumbledore silenced him with a swift wave of his hand. "The blame rests on myself."

"No," Cedric said. "It rests on Voldemort."

Dumbledore's eyes cut through his glasses, as sharp and blue as ice. Neither of them spoke for a time, the name swelling between them like a living thing, until Dumbledore withdrew his hand. "As much as we would love to have you at the ceremony, I respect your decision."

"There is another thing, professor." Cedric glanced at the door and back again. "Something I haven't told the doctors. Not even my parents."

Dumbledore leaned closer. "Is there something I can do?"

"I don't know." Cedric paused, then leaned opposite Dumbledore and rummaged in the drawer of the table at his bedside. He produced his wand, sat back against the pillow, and let it rest on the palms of both hands. "Sir, I â€|" He closed his fingers around the ash wood. When he tried to speak again his throat felt too tight.

"What is it, Cedric?"

Cedric looked up at Dumbledore, blinked, and realized as something chased the length of his cheek that he was crying. Cedric flushed, using his shirt cuff to wipe the tears from his cheeks. "I'm sorry," he said, embarrassed.

"There's no reason to be."

Cedric waited until he could catch his breath. He switched the wand to his right hand and held it up, point toward the ceiling, and closed his eyes.

"I can't do magic." Cedric gasped - out loud, the words had more power. They cut him to his core, threatened to pierce him all the way through. "I haven't been able to do a single spell since I got here." Cedric opened his eyes. He squeezed the wand until his knuckles bleached white. "I didn't realize it until a few days ago. I woke up in the middle night. I was trying to get to the washroom. I didn't think I needed a nurse to help me but it was dark, so I tried to do a lumos spell â€|" Shaking his head, Cedric took another deep breath that stuttered in his lungs. "It's gone."

Dumbledore came closer. He took the hand Cedric held his wand with and clasped it tightly between both of his own, his long weathered fingers cool on Cedric's skin. The wand went through the middle like a sword in a stone.

"You have been through something terrible, Cedric. Your body, your mind, they are still healing. Give yourself some time."

The tears were coming harder now but Dumbledore looked at Cedric so strongly, he couldn't manage to turn away.

"Has this ever happened before?" Cedric asked, struggling to keep his voice even. "Has a wizard or a witch ever lost their magic?"

Dumbledore's face fell. He peeled his hands away and sat back in the chair, eyes distant although they were directed at Cedric's wand. When he spoke it was so softly that Cedric had to lean closer to hear him properly.

"There was a witch, a very long time ago, who was attacked by a group of Muggle boys when she was young. It was cruel, mindless violence, and they beat her brutally. She was harmless, defenseless — and this scarred her, wounded her so deeply that she did not recover fully in the short span of her life. Her magic did not disappear, so to speak, but she was unable to control it, could not use it at will —" Dumbledore seemed to peer directly into the past, watching this girl suffer in echoes. He found the present in Cedric's eyes and pulled himself forward again. "That may be what is happening with you now. Perhaps it will take longer than you would like for you to use magic the way you are accustomed, but it is like a broken bone, Cedric. One does not continue walking on a fractured femur." He smiled gently. "You must allow yourself to heal."

"Did she die, that girl?" Cedric asked, and Dumbledore's smile turned sad, like his mother's.

"She did. But it was not related."

"Who was she, professor?"

"Ariana Dumbledore." Dumbledore looked down at his hand, at a ring with a pink gemstone on his smallest finger, and used his thumb to idly rotate it back and forth. "My sister."

Cedric's tears stopped. He'd had little contact with Dumbledore personally during his years at Hogwarts before the Tournament. It was a big school, Dumbledore was a busy man, and it's not like Cedric had been sitting on his thumbs until his last year. All that time and Cedric had only thought of the Headmaster in terms of what he represented rather than who he was — a great, talented, legendary and powerful wizard, but still a wizard, with as many skeletons in the closet as the next one, if not more. Cedric wondered what else he might have in common with Dumbledore, and if this was what he looked like when he talked about his own sister. His mouth hung open, ready to say something, but much like Cedric was quick to silence Fudge, Dumbledore did the same. He waved the words away, came to his feet, and extended his hand to Cedric again. Cedric took it, his wand still held fast in his other hand.

"Please, let me know if you change your mind about the ceremony, and if there is anything else you or your parents need, do not hesitate to send word."

"Thank you, sir. And sir, please, don't mention anything about this

to my parents. Or anyone." He swallowed. "I want to tell them myself."

"Of course." Dumbledore's smile was full and genuine again. He held Cedric's hand for a moment longer before he made his way toward the door, robes billowing around his feet, but when he reached the door he turned back like he had forgotten something, a finger raised in the air. "Also, if you are feeling up for it, a friend of yours tagged along who would like to see you."

Cedric tensed. He wasn't ready to see Cho yet but he knew it would be rude to decline. He smiled and nodded. "Great."

"I'll fetch them from the tearoom upstairs. Do not give up hope, Cedric Diggory." Dumbledore smiled again and left, the door clicking shut behind him, and Cedric collapsed against the pillow, breathing out hard and fast.

He held his wand at arm's length above his face and stared at it. It was as ordinary as a quill in his hand, no thrum of energy, no connection. It no longer felt like an extension of his arm, another part of his being, but rather a lifeless prop. He flicked his wrist, whispered, "Lumos," but the wand remained unlit.

Amos Diggory bragged that from the day Cedric was born, he and Eleanor knew that he would be a strong, brave wizard. Magic through and through. His father had told him once, "Magic is not in our blood, son. It is our blood."

Then what was in his heart now?

Cedric had realized the night he first tried to use magic that the emptiness inside of him, the missing piece that had not come back with him from wherever he went that night of the maze, that it was a part so intricately woven into the fabric of his being that he never once considered what life would be like without it.

That life unfolded before him then, down the length of his arm and out from his now useless wand, and it was dark.

Cedric didn't quite catch the thought as it first formed in his mind, a whisper in a great cacophony, a single voice a chorus, but its echo made him still, silenced everything else, and there it was.

For a sliver of a moment, Cedric wished he was the Resurrected Boy no longer, and just a dead one.

Cedric sat up, heart in his ears, and stuffed his wand back into the bedside table drawer. When he closed it he imagined locking up the thought along with it, but being contained did not make it disappear.

A knock at the door. Cedric smoothed down his hair, wiped once more at his eyes, and tried to smooth out the blankets with his shaking hands. "Come in," he called, then held his breath as he raised his head to meet Cho's eyes.

Instead, he saw a lightning bolt scar.

The open circle of Harry's mouth looked like it was prepared to say

something but whatever it was had disappeared the moment he entered the room. It dawned on Cedric just then that he had never seen Harry in anything other than his uniform, making his denim and jumper - Gryffindor red - almost bizarre. Cedric found himself convinced that Harry's hair must grow at twice the rate of a normal person because in the short time they'd been separated, Harry's shaggy mop was even more wild and unruly.

Cedric remembered the first time he saw Harry Potter at the Sorting ceremony his fourth year. The idea of Harry Potter preceded the real thing, and Cedric remembered feeling a bit disappointed when he saw a boy of eleven, average other than his scar, and so very small.

Cedric saw Harry then, one foot still in the hallway and one hand on the frame of the door, watching Cedric with spring grass green eyes part frightened and part hopeful, and Cedric didn't see an average boy at all.

He saw Harry Potter. Not the idea, not the legend, as much the Boy Who Lived as Cedric was the Resurrected Boy, bigger and greater than his title. Cedric saw Harry and felt at peace for the first time since he was brought back from the dead.

"Harry," Cedric said, because it was all he could think to say, and Harry gasped, as if he were surprised to hear Cedric speak, like he had not truly believed Cedric was alive until this moment.

And then Harry sprinted across the room like he was riding a Firebolt and crashed into Cedric with such force that Cedric lost his breath. Harry's arms wound around Cedric's chest, fingers curling into the back of his shirt, cheek to cheek, and for a moment Cedric just sat there in stunned silence, thoughts scattered to the wind. But it was only a moment, and then Cedric was wrapped around Harry, too, laughing with breathless relief in his ear.

"Harry," Cedric repeated, squeezing the boy in his arms. He still couldn't manage to find any other words but his name.

Harry withdrew but remained close, grinning. He studied Cedric, scanning his face from his hairline to his chin and back again, as if making confirmation that he was indeed solid, alive, and not an illusion. "You're okay," Harry said, still in disbelief.

Cedric faltered for a second. 'Okay' seemed â€| relative, but now wasn't the time. He nodded, smiled, and gestured to the chair Dumbledore had been sitting in before. Harry sat and continued to marvel at Cedric, and Cedric at Harry, until they both realized at the same moment that neither had spoken for an unusually long amount of time, simply staring at each other.

Cedric cleared his throat. Harry shifted in the chair and they both looked away, at the floor, the bed, and then back to one another.

They laughed in unison.

"It was good seeing your father again. And your mother is very nice," Harry finally said, as way of breaking the ice.

"So that's what Dumbledore told them when they left, that you were here." Cedric shook his head. "But he wouldn't tell me. He likes surprising people, doesn't he?"

Harry's grin broadened. "You have no idea." He touched the tip of his middle finger to the bridge of his glasses even though they hadn't moved down his nose at all, a nervous habit Cedric noticed during the tournament. Harry turned his eyes down to his lap, the fingers of one hand picking under the nails of the other. "I got your letter," he said, glancing up briefly, then back to his fidgeting digits. "Thank you, by the way."

"Harry, simply believing you are telling the truth is the least I can do, but I was there. I saw -" Cedric paused. "I saw enough." He met Harry's gaze. "He's back. Voldemort."

He'd said it several times now, that name. It was too ominous to say in his youth. Powerful, too, and it still was, but speaking it no longer felt like a curse. It was acknowledgement of something even worse.

Harry's face had fallen to something too solemn for a boy of nearly fifteen. "Yes. He is."

"What do we do now?"

Harry frowned at his hands. "I don't know, really. But we'll think of something."

They were silent for a while, the uncertain future unfolding before them and neither wanting to look forward.

"The Minister came to see me. Kept asking if I had been in contact with you." Cedric shook his head. "He's convinced we're a part of some conspiracy."

Harry laughed and shook his head. "Contrary to what everyone wants to believe of me, I just want to pass all of my classes and not be the center of attention. For once." He touched his glasses again. Crossed his legs at the ankle under his chair, then uncrossed them again.

"Harry Potter," Cedric said, and waited for him to look up. "That ship sailed a long time ago."

Harry cracked a smile. It looked good on him. "You're probably right."

Cedric smiled back at him, and the two fell into silence once more, but it was comfortable, both reflecting on their own thoughts. When Cedric spoke again, Harry seemed more relaxed, all of his nervous twitching stilled.

"Do you know what you did to bring me back?" Cedric asked, studying Harry's eyes when he looked at him. "What spell you cast? What magic it was?"

The question was answered by a slow shake of Harry's head. "I don't know."

"What do you remember?"

Harry bit his lip for a few moments, eyes searching the floor. "When we got back to the front of the maze, you'd already been â€¦ gone for a long time. You were cold. I was â€¦ I was crying â€¦" Harry's eyes narrowed, and Cedric could see his chest rising and falling more quickly. "I don't know what I did. I was crying, holding you, and your father was calling for you, and I just â€¦" He shifted his gaze back to his hands, spread them open to look at his palms like he'd never seen them before. "I didn't want you to be dead. And then â€¦" He curled his fingers. "You weren't."

"Eerie," Cedric recited quietly from memory. "A blinding white light, and a terrible bang."

"I didn't think it was eerie."

Cedric met Harry's eyes, the brilliant emeralds of dead kings' crowns.

"I thought it was beautiful," Harry said, his voice tangibly sincere, and then he flushed with embarrassment. "Very weird, though."

Cedric smiled. "If that isn't the summary of your life."

"And yours, now, too." Harry said, sympathetic. "You're famous. And not for being the Triwizard Victor."

Shaking his head, Cedric motioned vaguely in the air. "I can't believe they even care to think about that with everything that's going on."

"Fudge has his head in the sand. He's determined to keep everyone else there, too. You did deserve it, though."

"Triwizard Victor. The Resurrected Boy." Cedric smoothed his hands over the beige hospital blanket. "I'd like to just be Cedric, if the world doesn't mind."

"You're Cedric to me," Harry said. "But I'd never use the word 'just'."

Cedric glanced up. They smiled at each other.

"Cedric, do you remember â€¦" Harry hesitated, unsure if he should proceed.

"What?"

He took a deep breath. "Do you remember speaking to me after â€¦ after you were killed?"

Cedric stared at him blankly.

"You were a â€¦ well, you were a ghost," he explained, and shivered with the memory. He closed his eyes briefly. "You and my parents were there, actually, as â€¦ echoes, that's how Dumbledore described it. You all spoke to me." He reopened his eyes. "Do you remember that?"

When Cedric breathed in, he swore he smelled old soil, late evening fog, decay. His breath came out in a rattling burst. "No," he said. "I remember green light and then â€¦ nothing. What did I say?"

"You asked me to â€¦ bring you back with me, for your parents."

It was only for a few moments, but Cedric imagined it vividly: his father mourning over his body, his mother collapsing at the news, and being lowered into the ground beside Charlotte in the Diggory plot.

"Thank you, Harry," Cedric managed, even though his chest and throat were tight, and his heart was hammering in his ears. "For everything."

"You would have done the same for me."

"Brought you back to life?" Cedric shook his head. "I think you may be the only wizard who can do that, Harry Potter."

They looked at each other with mutual understanding. Harry raised a hand, like he was going to reach out for him, and then decided against it, lowering it back to his lap.

"Are you sure you're okay, Cedric?"

The automatic answer didn't come. Cedric frowned and looked to the bedside table on the opposite side of the bed.

"Cedric?"

Cedric came around again. "Honestly? No. Not entirely. But I hope to be."

Harry didn't offer any rehashed words of optimistic advice, he didn't tell Cedric to just hang in there and be tough, or be grateful, or anything. Harry just accepted his answer with a nod.

Cedric figured that in all of the Wizarding world, or the whole planet for that matter, the only person who could even begin to understand the Resurrected Boy was the one who brought him back.

They talked for a while longer - about the other Triwizard contestants, their fellow students, St. Mungo's - and then Harry rose to take his leave. He hesitated at the bedside, then hugged Cedric abruptly for a second time, and Cedric held him there for several moments longer than he had the first.

"I'll write you," Harry said, squeezing Cedric around his shoulders.

"I'll write back." And Cedric meant it.

Harry paused in the doorway and turned back to Cedric one last time before he left, and they both looked at each other as if expecting the other to vanish before their eyes, but they remained, in flesh, bewildered and alive. They exchanged smiles, and then Harry was gone.

When Cedric went to bed that night, Harry was waiting for him in his dream again, but he was no longer screaming.

End  
file.